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ABSTRACT

Research supports the following four key elements of any comprehensive education-improvement effort: (1) high standards for all students; (2) teachers better trained for teaching to high standards; (3) flexibility to stimulate local reform, coupled with accountability for results; and (4) close partnerships among families, communities, and schools. By focusing resources on these key elements of education improvement, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), the law that reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), substantially contributes to advancing the quality of teaching and learning for all students. This brochure describes how the IASA contributes to each of the elements of comprehensive education improvement. For example, the IASA provides resources to states, districts, and schools to support their efforts to help students reach high state standards. The IASA created the new Eisenhower Professional Development program as well as programs funded by the new Title I and by Title VII. The IASA revises the ESEA to provide broad flexibility to states, school districts, and schools in their implementation of federal programs. The IASA simultaneously calls for strategies to hold school districts and schools accountable for improved student achievement. Title I promotes greater family-school and community-school connections. The brochure also describes activities aimed at achieving the Department of Education's goal of coordinating efforts to implement reform legislation. (LMI)

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The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994

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The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

September 1995

Twenty years of research and the experiences of dedicated and creative practitioners have contributed to the U.S. Department of Education's elementary and secondary education reform legislation — including the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000), the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Goals 2000 helps states and communities establish a framework for comprehensive, standards-based education reform for all students. The IASA provides additional support and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act helps build additional pathways to enable all children to meet challenging state standards.

Research supports the following four key elements of any comprehensive education improvement effort: 1) high standards for all students; 2) teachers better trained for teaching to high standards; 3) flexibility to stimulate local reform, coupled with accountability for results; and 4) close partnerships among families, communities, and schools. By focusing resources on these key elements of education improvement, the IASA, the law that reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), substantially contributes to advancing the quality of teaching and learning for all students.

High standards for all students

In an increasingly complex and diverse society and an economic environment that will be dominated by high-skill jobs, today's students must meet high academic standards in order to succeed. Research and practice suggest that all students can learn to meet far more challenging academic standards than we currently expect of them. The IASA provides resources to states, districts, and schools to support their efforts to help students reach high state standards.

- The IASA replaces the piecemeal structure of the old ESEA. ESEA programs will now be integrated into a state's overall school improvement efforts, focused around a core of challenging state standards. ESEA programs now promote the alignment of all education components — curriculum and instruction, professional development, school leadership, accountability, and school improvement — so that every aspect of the education system works together to ensure that all children can attain challenging standards.
- Students served by the new ESEA programs including Helping Disadvantaged Students Meet High Standards (Title I, Part A), the Education of Migratory Children program (Title I, Part C), the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII), and the Indian Education program (Title IX) will be expected to achieve to the same standards that are expected of all children.

Professional experiences that better prepare teachers to teach to high standards

Professional development for teachers, principals, and other school staff is critical to creating and sustaining the learning environments necessary to help all students reach higher levels of achievement.

- The new Eisenhower Professional Development program (Title II) supports sustained, intensive, high-quality professional development tied to challenging state academic standards. Most of the funds will focus on teacher improvement efforts based on professional development plans created and implemented by school districts and schools. The program ensures that teachers and principals play a crucial role in determining what kind of training they need as professional development moves from one-time workshops toward more lasting efforts that are integrated into the daily life of the school. Program funds will assist institutions of higher education and other organizations to develop the capacity to offer high-quality professional development. Funds may also be used to support the development of clearinghouses, professional development institutes, and networks of teachers and administrators. Title II funds will be tied to other professional development efforts, such as those under Title I and Title VII, to enhance the capability of school districts and schools to better meet the needs of today's diverse students.

- The new Title I emphasizes high-quality teaching and professional development. State, district, and school plans will outline strategies for providing teachers, administrators, other school staff, and district-level personnel with the kind of professional development they need to help ensure that low-achieving students in high-poverty schools meet challenging standards.
- The professional development programs funded by Title VII promote high-quality instruction for limited English proficient students. Title VII authorizes competitive grants to institutions of higher education, states, and districts to upgrade the pre-service and in-service professional development of teachers and other educational personnel. This training will better prepare teachers to teach limited English proficient students to meet the same challenging standards expected of all children.

Flexibility to stimulate local initiative, coupled with responsibility for results

The IASA revises the ESEA to provide broad flexibility to states, school districts, and schools in their implementation of federal programs. At the same time, the IASA calls for strategies to hold school districts and schools accountable for improved student achievement.

- States and school districts may choose to consolidate their federal administrative funds and to administer those funds in a coordinated way without having to keep detailed records. The law also allows states and local districts to consolidate their plans and applications when they apply for federal funding.
- For the first time, ESEA includes a waiver provision. States and local school districts are encouraged to request waivers from the U.S. Department of Education if they find that statutory or regulatory requirements inhibit the implementation of effective programs or reform efforts.
- Title I schoolwide programs encourage innovation geared toward high standards. The new law expands opportunities for schools to operate schoolwide programs so that high-poverty schools can integrate their services, strategies, and resources — including resources under Title I and other Department programs — to reform comprehensively the entire instructional plan for all children in the school.

- Title I will ensure greater accountability through the use of state assessments that measure students' progress toward new state standards. The same standards and assessments developed by a state for all children will apply to children participating in Title I. These two fundamental changes in Title I — the role of high academic standards and the use of state assessments — will help ensure that Title I is an integral part of state reform efforts, rather than another add-on federal program.
- The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 (ESEA, Title IV) will also ensure greater accountability. States and school districts will measure performance and report publicly on progress toward meeting their goals and objectives for making schools violence- and drug-free. The Department will establish a new national evaluation system to assess the impact of the Act on youth, schools, and communities.
- Public charter schools seek to improve school and student performance by replacing rules-based governance with goals-based accountability. The Public Charter Schools program (Title X, Part C) authorizes grants to charter school developers to plan their education program around the results the school aims to achieve.

Promoting partnerships among families, communities, and schools

Research and practice show that substantial, on-going family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education and a safe, disciplined learning environment.

- Title I promotes greater family-school and community-school connections. For the first time, Title I will support partnerships between schools and parents for improved student achievement through school-parent compacts. Compacts will spell out the goals, expectations, and shared responsibilities of schools and parents as partners in student success.
- Coordinated services can help address problems children face outside the classroom that affect their performance in school by improving children's and parent's access to social, health, and education services. Under the Coordinated Services program (Title XI of ESEA), school districts, schools and consortia of schools may use up to 5 percent of the funds they receive under the ESEA to develop, implement, or expand a coordinated services project.

- New Title I provisions also foster integration with other education programs, including Title VII, Head Start, Even Start, and School-to-Work Opportunities systems and, where necessary, health and social service programs to serve better the needs of students in high-poverty schools.
- Effective instruction and learning require an environment that is both safe and drug-free. Under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, funds are available to states to create a comprehensive strategy that deals with problems of school violence and drug use. The Act provides flexibility to school districts in designing programs that may include comprehensive school-safety strategies, activities with community agencies, implementation of violence-prevention activities, installation of metal detectors, and hiring security guards.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has made a commitment to enhance efforts to coordinate the implementation of its reform legislation, including the IASA, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. It has moved away from isolated, programmatic efforts toward an integrated system of high-quality service that focuses on improving the performance of all students.

- ED has entered into, and will continue to foster, strong partnerships with states and districts through activities such as convening state, school district, teacher, and parent representatives to participate in the peer review of state plans.
- Within ED, cross-program teams will conduct program monitoring focused on performance.
- ED will offer rapid, high-quality program application and waiver review.
- To better serve educators and administrators, the IASA creates a comprehensive system of technical assistance to replace the dozens of technical assistance centers that currently provide isolated services to individual programs.

All of the U.S. Department of Education's new efforts are designed to support states, districts, and schools as they work to ensure that *all* children in America reach challenging academic standards.

U.S. Department of Education

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